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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1239th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 20 August 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. BANTON

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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 5) (continued)

Seventh to tenth periodic reports of Burundi (continued) (CERD/C/295/Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the delegation of Burundi resumed their places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. NSANZE (Burundi) said that, while there might seem to be a paradox or contradiction in the statement in the report (CERD/C/295/Add.1) that Burundi had no races or ethnic groups, it was nonetheless true. A group of people was considered to be an ethnic group if its members had a culture and civilization in common. All Burundians shared not only those two features but also the same language and way of life, there were not even any dialects. Another defining factor for ethnic groups or tribes was the existence of geographical divisions. In Burundi, before the cataclysm of 1993, Hutus and Tutsis had coexisted in the villages and collines; that ethnic mixture had not been institutionalized by the State. There was no geographical division between groups in Burundi, and furthermore all Burundians shared the same monotheistic religion and the same surnames. In short, the country had achieved a highly advanced degree of integration, more than almost any of the countries whose nationals sat on the Committee. After independence, however - and Belgium, the former colonial Power, could not be blamed - that integration had been disrupted by the Burundians themselves, Hutus and Tutsis, in their struggle for power. Currently there existed what might be called artificial political ethnic groups, whereas, from a purely biological standpoint, there were numerous mixed families deriving from centuries of intermarriage. The break in integration dated to the post-colonial era.

3. Burundi had notably been influenced by events in neighbouring Rwanda, where the social disaster of 1958-59 had led to the first genocide. Moreover, Burundi was overpopulated, with almost 7 million inhabitants living on 30,000 square metres of territory. Poverty, underdevelopment and overpopulation were the real causes of the chronic conflict in his country. The successive tragedies affecting Burundi were being attributed to the respective ethnic groups, but they had coexisted peacefully over the centuries. It was the politicians, the elite - especially those lacking in political intelligence, professionalism, academic qualifications or other skills - who had created the so-called "ethnic" cleavage for their own political and material survival. There was only one ethnic group in Burundi.

4. The ignoble assassination of President Ndadaye in 1993 had been condemned by most Burundians; he had been the President not of one social faction but of the entire country. Some said he had been assassinated because he was Hutu, but in fact it had been for political reasons. Many Tutsis had voted for him; they had grown rich during the previous regime and had even contributed to his presidential campaign. In August 1995 Mr. Nsanze had addressed the Security Council, calling for an urgent international investigative commission to identify the President's assassins as well as those responsible for the massacres of many Hutus and Tutsis. Those massacres had unfortunately recurred, almost since the time of independence, and they were committed both by Hutus against Tutsis and by Tutsis against Hutus.

5. According to the International Commission of Inquiry in Burundi, genocide had occurred against a part of the population, but another part of the population had also been the victim of massacres; a more impartial body would have to resolve the question. Recently, the Secretary-General and the Security Council had been asked to create an international criminal court, but neither of them had considered it was the right time to do so. In the meantime, national courts had been established.

6. Mr. BARAHIRAJE (Burundi) said that one of the Government's main priorities was to combat impunity. Specialized chambers had been created within the appeals courts, of which there were three and had been operating for more than two years. Defence was provided by the bar association, with the assistance of international lawyers. Case files had been drawn up, convictions were being handed down and executed and legal proceedings were now under way; a detailed list of activities could be provided.

7. Mr. NSANZE (Burundi) said that since the new regime had come to power in Burundi in July 1996, the neighbouring countries had held high-level meetings and proposed certain measures, such as sending security assistance - a euphemism for creating a military presence in Burundi. That idea had aroused widespread protest, although some segments of the population had been in favour. The neighbouring countries had then proclaimed an economic blockade against Burundi that same month. The Government had made some mistakes in reacting to the blockade. From the legal standpoint, however, it was pleading, not on behalf of the regime, but of the Burundian people. Contrary to what the authors of the embargo had anticipated, it was the population - Twas, Hutus and Tutsis - that was suffering the most, and not the regime. The Government was doing everything in its power to have the embargo lifted, but the conditions imposed made it difficult for it to negotiate. Most of the Government's political partners were willing to negotiate, but some including the political party of President Buyoya, were not; it was a dilemma, but everyone was now eagerly awaiting the outcome of the negotiations scheduled for 25 August.

8. Some of the political players were refusing to participate in the negotiations because the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD), which some had accused of committing genocide, had been invited to participate. Were all CNDD members guilty of genocide? Once an international or national legal body was established, it must take care to identify those responsible for genocide within the political movements, whether the CNDD, other political parties or the former presidential majority, and those designated as authors of genocide should be excluded from the negotiations. Anyone - whether civilian or military - suspected of being involved in genocide or attempted genocide should be brought to justice and tried by international judges, national judges or a combination thereof. Interrogations were already under way in connection with the assassination of President Ndadaye, involving 79 soldiers, including one high-ranking officer, as well as some civilians.

9. Burundi was a small, overpopulated, landlocked country and one of the least developed; the embargo was having a disastrous effect, much worse than the effect of the embargoes against Cuba, which was surrounded by water; Libya, only a very small proportion of whose economy was affected; or Iraq, a

rich oil-producing country with other economic, commercial and industrial sources. The Burundian people were dying as a result of the embargo; the Committee should take action to help them.

10. Members had asked about the distribution of power among the various groups in the Government, the army, the justice system, etc. He was opposed to any system of quotas for certain groups in such jobs, which might itself become a form of racial discrimination. People were not employed because they were Hutu or Tutsi, but because they were qualified for the job. No Government since Burundi's independence had consisted entirely of members of one group, although naturally there had at times been some nepotism or favouritism to the benefit of one group over another. Some injustices had occurred, but the Government was determined to resolve them by means of a national forum where all groups could meet on an equal basis and state their claims. In any case, the injustices were not necessarily based on ethnic grounds: in 1986, he himself had been thrown into prison by the then President Bagaza, a Tutsi like himself, because of his political opinions.

11. Members had asked about the conduct of the Burundi army. The army had been faced with a dilemma. The Hutus had accused the Tutsis of carrying out massacres, and vice versa, and the army had felt obliged to intervene in order to protect the people. It was not taking action against Hutus or Tutsis, but against criminals. If the Committee wished, it could send a delegation to Burundi to investigate the army's conduct and show that it had done only what was necessary. Naturally, some members of the army had committed acts of violence, particularly those who had lost their families in the massacres of 1993 and 1994; some of those acts had been ethnically motivated, but the perpetrators had been duly punished for them. Such acts had considerably decreased in recent years.

12. Mr. BARAHIRAJE (Burundi), replying to the question about the number of Hutus employed in the judicial system, said that he had begun his own legal career under a Hutu judge. He had not been aware of any ethnic problems. It was only later that the "demonization" of the Hutus had begun. The Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly was a Hutu, and had been prosecuted for his actions during the political crisis, although he had been acquitted. The judicial system took no account of a person's ethnic origin, and had certainly not dismissed any Hutu judges.

13. Mr. NSANZE (Burundi) said that, if the Committee was concerned about the distribution of power in the country, it would do better to ask about the representation of the various political parties, rather than that of the various tribal groups. It was true that most members of the Government were Hutus, although he was still reluctant to use the term "Hutu" or "Tutsi" because the various groups did not have different languages, culture or territories and were thus not considered by the Government to be different ethnic groups. To give some specific figures, the Government appointed in 1993 by President Ndadaye had contained between 8 and 12 members (out of a total of between 23 and 27) belonging to the party which had lost the election. President Ndadaye had not been obliged to appoint them, but he had done so to increase the sense of security of both Hutus and Tutsis. He did not have any figures about the distribution of power between the various groups in the new Government.

14. Mr. BARAHIRAJE (Burundi) said that the Government in power since 25 July 1996 was a Government of National Union, whose aim was national reconciliation and which contained representatives of all political opinions.

15. Members had asked why the Constitution had been suspended. Unfortunately, some provisions of the old Constitution had made it impossible to restore full political order, and the Constitution had been suspended for that reason.

16. Mr. NSANZE (Burundi) recalled that members had asked about the situation of the Twa group. The data quoted about the ethnic composition of Burundi were very questionable, since there had never been a census in the country. The Twa people were not excluded from Burundi society and were not persecuted in any way. They had chosen to live at the margin of society, away from the Hutu and Tutsi groups. The new Government had invited them to participate in political affairs.

17. Members had asked about the Abashingantahe Council, or council of wise people ("sages"). In its original form, the members of the Council had been chosen by the population, both Hutu and Tutsi, for their moral qualities and social and political skills. A few months before, the Council had been officially recognized in a presidential decree. Some still felt that the people should choose the members of the Council, whereas others felt that their nomination by the head of State would be a safeguard against segregationist tendencies. The Council, which had approximately 10 female members, had recently asked the President for decision-making powers, in addition to its existing advisory role, and that issue was still being debated.

18. Regarding the new regime's achievements in the area of peace and security, some progress had been made, but many problems remained in the administration, the judicial system and other sectors partly because of the economic blockade. Acts of violence by the security forces always received considerable publicity, but the atrocities committed by the rebels against both Hutus and Tutsis appeared to go unnoticed. The Government was determined to fulfil its commitment to restore peace and security for all Burundians.

19. In reply to questions about the "regroupment camps" for civilians in various parts of the country, he explained that because of the many massacres which had taken place, civilians, both Hutu and Tutsi, had been invited to gather in the camps for displaced persons, where they received the proper and necessary military protection, and had done so voluntarily. The measure had drawn considerable international criticism because it had not been properly understood. It was only a temporary measure which did not affect the people's rights to carry on farming and other economic activities.

20. Members had asked why there had been no legal proceedings against persons who had committed acts of racial or ethnic discrimination. The Government was trying to set up an impartial mechanism through the criminal chambers to consider, inter alia, racial or ethnic discrimination cases, as well as reforming the criminal justice system as a whole. The accused had the right to national or international counsel for their defence. However, trained and impartial judges would be needed who enjoyed the trust of the people.

21. Mr. BARAHIRAJE (Burundi) said that three criminal chambers, functioning within the appeal courts, were in operation in the country: he would send the Committee statistics and tables relating to their work. The people who appeared before those chambers were prosecuted in accordance with the law establishing the criminal chambers and Burundi criminal law and were granted all the rights of a defendant, including the right to appeal to the court of cassation, the Supreme Court and even to the President who could grant mercy only after consultation with the Supreme Council of the Magistrature.

22. Returning to the question of peace and security, he said that the new Government's main aim was to restore the authority of the State and then to establish a peace process in which the parties to the conflict could resolve their differences. A Ministry for the Peace Process had just been established. Insecurity persisted in some parts of the country, but the overall situation was gradually improving He felt that the Government's actions so far were ample proof of its sincere wish for peace.

23. Mr. NSANZE (Burundi), replying to questions on human rights associations, said that there were a number of multi-ethnic human rights leagues in Burundi.

24. As far as the refugees were concerned, their situation could only be described as a national tragedy. Burundi was admittedly one of the greatest originators of refugees but it had always been the policy of the present and previous regimes, at least theoretically, to appeal to them to return. Unfortunately the conditions obtaining in the country at certain times had constituted an obstacle to the return of all refugees. According to recent information, there were 200,000 Burundian refugees in Tanzania and a further 80,000 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, as the conditions in Burundi were now worse than ever due to the total economic blockade, it was likely that people would return to find themselves refugees in their own country.

25. Burundi therefore needed the help of the international community in securing a total lifting of the embargo against the Burundian people. Neither the Committee nor any other United Nations body nor its respective Member States were being called upon to recognize the current regime but rather to help the Burundian people create a healthy atmosphere in their country. His party was prepared to negotiate with all national movements which could demonstrate their representativity. Nine political parties, formerly in opposition, including the hard-liners, had been represented at all the meetings which he had chaired at party headquarters, and high-level talks were expected to take place shortly between the military, the armed rebels and the politicians.

26. Assistance in the form of international troops was not required and was unjustified. The Burundi army, despite periods of armed insurrection, had succeeded in limiting the damage and was in the process of completing its mission. However, if the military were found to have committed acts of an illegal nature against the population, it would be penalized.

27. In addition to international assistance, he proposed formally that the Committee itself should send a special fact-finding delegation to Burundi to see for itself what was happening and who was responsible for the massacres. Any judgement made at a distance would be subjective and based on incomplete information. It was therefore his hope that the Committee would respond positively to his proposal.

28. Burundi's problem was not an ethnic one but a political one, brought about by the regimes of three successive military heads of State, who had fought amongst themselves, not for ethnic reasons since they were all Tutsis, but for power. Political solutions were therefore required. A democratic system needed to be established to put into power a leader whose policies were the most reliable and acceptable to the people.

29. The army would also have to be restructured once a national covenant of peaceful intercommunity existence had been established. To that end, recruitment on the basis of qualification rather than on a regional or ethnic basis, would ensure its neutrality and readiness to serve any head of State, whether Hutu, Tutsi or Twa. In that connection the South African army had set an example which Burundi would do well to follow.

30. Among the reasons for Burundi's situation, poverty, overpopulation and a lack of resources both in the private and public sectors were the most obvious. The private sector was small and could not hope to make good the shortcomings of the State apparatus, for instance with regard to employment. The answer to Burundi and Rwanda's problems therefore lay beyond national boundaries. Only regional integration could provide the vital space for the populations and the opportunities they so urgently needed.

31. Another important objective was to eliminate all ethnic influence in politics and to establish a political leadership capable of achieving the country's objectives. Indeed those were the two main objectives of his own political party. Burundi needed political leaders who would provide hospitals, schools, jobs and security, but they would not succeed without international help.

32. As to where the country was going and the solution to the cycle of violence, only national reconciliation would enable all parties to coexist in a country that was safe, united and peaceful for all three component groups.

33. The CHAIRMAN thanked the delegation for the clarity and force with which it had elaborated on the Government's policies. It had been especially satisfactory to note the parallel drawn with the South African process of reconciliation.

34. Mr. WOLFRUM (Country Rapporteur) said that differences in perception between the Committee and the delegation appeared to have lessened to some extent in the course of the dialogue.

35. He fully agreed with the representative of Burundi that the task of the Burundi Government and of the Committee was the protection of individuals or groups. The Committee did not take sides and spoke only for individuals who

for many years had led a very dangerous and unsatisfactory existence in Burundi. Its objectives were the same as those of the population in terms of better living conditions.

36. Furthermore, the Committee had no intention of starting any process which might lead to the disintegration of the State and had even passed a general recommendation to that effect. Its aim was to preserve the integrity of States.

37. It was undoubtedly true, as the delegation had stated, that a solution to the problems of the Burundi population could only be found at the regional level. It was therefore important that each State in the region should be ready for a solution. Cooperation between neighbouring States in the region was also essential, bearing in mind in particular the claim that Burundi was a victim of developments of other countries. For instance, although Burundi was producing refugees, it had also received refugees and that had an impact on the situation in the country.

38. He had taken some encouragement from a statement which had been brought to his notice that negotiations had started between the Government and the CNDD at the beginning of the year and that both parties had decided to identify the problems and the causes of the Burundi conflict and agree upon appropriate solutions, notably the mechanisms which would guarantee the restitution of constitutional order, peaceful coexistence, the protection of all strata of the Burundi population, the cessation of all hostilities and the end of violence. He fully agreed with those objectives.

39. One of the most important elements of that process was the problem of identification. The Committee had been told that the problem was a political one. In the Committee's experience, few issues were of a non-political nature. Some of Burundi's problems were clearly due to overpopulation and economic hardship resulting from the devastating effect of the embargo. Others undoubtedly stemmed from the artificially created divergences which only the peace plan could solve. Divergences clearly existed in the perception of some groups, and the present regime should therefore be striving to overcome them and restore national unity. In that respect at least the Committee and the delegation were in agreement. The issue was a serious one which required more work, insight and assessment. The discussion had nevertheless led to a better understanding and there had been some very promising indications in the State party's statement.

40. Another serious problem to be solved was that of impunity, and Burundi was not alone in that respect. South Africa, too, had had to deal with the problem and its ingenious solution might be worth looking into, but not necessarily copying. Although criminal law did not solve all problems, it was essential that those who had committed mass violations of human rights should be brought to justice and prosecuted regardless of their present positions in the army, the judiciary or elsewhere. The three special chambers which had been established and the 80 soldiers facing trial would not alone be the answer. The question raised the previous day as to whether those who had been accused of participation in the 1993 and later massacres had been brought to trial had not been answered nor did the figures supplied provide any indication.

41. The Committee had received additional important information on the court system, notably that foreign barristers could participate in court proceedings. That was a welcome development which should be mentioned in the concluding observations as a positive aspect. However, the Committee had learned that, for reasons unknown, no foreign barristers had participated in the trial of a Twa who had recently been sentenced to death.

42. Much had been said about the quota system and that it was inappropriate on ethnic grounds. That argument was understandable where the Government, the administration and the judiciary were concerned. However, as the country clearly did not have enough qualified people from all ethnic groups, the educational system should be opened up to everybody on an equal footing. The statement by a member of the delegation that there had been injustices in the past which needed to be corrected was encouraging for the future.

43. The regroupment system remained a cause for concern despite the assurance that the free will of the people had been upheld. The fact that regroupment had been carried out under military control and surveillance could have a negative impact on certain parts of the population more than on others. It would be absolutely contrary to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination if regrouping were to result in some form of ethnic cleansing, whether intentional or by effect. There had been no indication of ethnic cleansing and no accusations were being made but in the light of experience elsewhere, the warning had to be given.

44. Information had been provided about the refugées who had left Burundi and the appeal for them to return to their country, where it was hoped they would find reconciliation, but the problem of the refugees in Burundi remained, whatever their country of origin, and their situation gave rise to considerable concern.

45. In response to the delegation's encouragement to the Committee to send a delegation to Burundi to appreciate the situation there at first hand, he explained that the Committee had never before taken such a step. It had previously sent a mission to Kosovo, but more for mediation than for inquiry purposes, and on two other occasions had sent a member to other countries to offer assistance. It would therefore have to consider the offer further and he would reserve any judgement on the issue for the time being. The idea did have the merit of affording the Committee an opportunity to obtain direct information on the situation rather than assessing it from afar.

46. He was not sure whether it was within the mandate of the Committee to send such a mission, since that was normally a matter for the United Nations to decide, but he appreciated the spirit in which the offer had been extended and considered the offer to be a very positive move on the part of the delegation. It showed a willingness on the part of Burundi to continue the dialogue on a very solid basis and to avail itself of the Committee's assistance - one of the Committee's main roles - in examining the root causes of the situation in Burundi, and it would certainly make for more objective grounds on which the Committee could base its further consideration of the implementation of the Convention in Burundi.

47. He welcomed the positive attitude demonstrated towards continued constructive, more informed dialogue, and expressed the hope that the Committee would be able to help Burundi in overcoming a very discouraging and serious situation. The delegation of Burundi could rest assured of the Committee's commitment to extending all possible assistance.

48. Mr. YUTZIS said in connection with the differences of opinion on the definition of what constituted an ethnic group, there were statistics, conclusive data on the effects of the situation in Burundi on the Hutus and, mainly, the Tutsis. At the current stage of events, which probably were rooted in the history of the country, there was indeed a political division, which as Mr. Wolfrum had said could be interpreted in many ways. If it was a problem of power, it translated into tensions between two groups which had already been delimited in one way or the other. That seemed to be an undisputable fact.

49. Paragraph 26 of the report, in connection with the implementation of article 4, stated that the Political Parties Act prohibited all forms of discrimination based on ethnic status. Such a provision could hardly have been introduced with foreign ethnic groups in mind and was to be seen as proof that the problem existed within the country, otherwise it would be totally abstract and have nothing to do with the potential for discrimination in Burundi.

50. Economic blockades had never had much effect in the past, and very often had a severely negative impact on the population, particularly the civilian population. He recognized that the problem between Hutus was Tutsis was not unique to Burundi; all States in the region were affected and none should evade its responsibilities towards the groups concerned. In that connection, the information available to the Committee was disturbing.

51. Mr. ABOUL-NASR associated himself with all of Mr. Wolfrum's concluding remarks and thanked the delegation of Burundi for its invitation to the Committee to send a member or a group to ascertain the situation there. He suggested that a formal invitation might be extended by way of a letter to the Committee through the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

52. On the question of the delegation's request for assistance from the Committee and for inclusion in its findings of an acknowledgement of the human suffering occasioned by the economic blockade of Burundi, he wondered whether the delegation could tell the Committee, if, as in the case of Iraq, statements had been issued by other United Nations organizations on the suffering caused by the economic blockade. If not, perhaps the State party might consider also appealing to other United Nations organizations, whose subsequent statements might provide a basis for the Committee's action.

53. Mr. NSANZE (Burundi) said that national reconciliation was the ultimate goal of a long and arduous process that should be initiated as soon as possible, but could not be achieved overnight.

54. The political situation was problematic and required a political solution. *It was true that ethnic groups did now* exist but their mode of existence was not compatible with the scientific, etymological and biological

definition of an ethnic group. There was no attempt by the delegation to minimize the recognized fact that they were political realities. On the contrary, their passion was explained by the very fact that they were artificial and not authentic. Their existence was an inescapable fact that had to be taken into account and a solution found for the problem of what he saw as "politico-ethnic groups", which were to be treated accordingly.

55. He agreed entirely with the comment that the trial of 80 soldiers did not solve the problem of past massacres, saying that perpetrators of such crimes, regardless of their ethnic origin, should be brought to trial. The situation had not been addressed adequately and he had been informed that there were 6,000 case files on alleged mass killings, so the problem had not been forgotten.

56. He was unaware of the case of Stanislas Mashini, a member of the Twa ethnic group, but would request further information.

57. The delegation of Burundi agreed wholeheartedly with the Committee that ethnicity should not be institutionalized. As to whether there was discrimination in education and whether Hutus were being victimized through the system, he explained that prior to Burundi's accession to independence, education was provided by white European missionaries. Any blame for subsequent discrimination in education should therefore be laid at their door. During the colonial era, a school had been established for the education of the princely and royal caste which had never identified itself with either Tutsis or Hutus. After the dissolution of the caste, its members had alternated between association with the Tutsis and the Hutus depending on which of the groups had held political power. After independence the schools had still been run by the clergy and missionaries until the accession of President Bagaza to power but even then there had been no discrimination whatsoever between Tutsis and Hutus. However, during the Bagaza regime a system designed to discriminate in favour of Tutsis had been developed - and that was indeed one of the reasons for the overthrow of that regime. The successive regimes in Burundi were, therefore, not responsible for discrimination in schools. Such discrimination no longer existed. If the Committee sent a delegation to Burundi it would be a perfect opportunity to determine the true situation.

58. Addressing the point made by Mr. Wolfrum that the regroupment camps were under military, police or militia control, he said that Mr. Wolfrum seemed to have missed the point that many centres for displaced persons had been formed spontaneously during the tragic events over the previous four-five years and they had included both Tutsis and Hutus. It was true that under the initiative of the current Government, the population had been regrouped in some zones. He challenged the Committee, through the proposed delegation, to ascertain whether there had been any instances whatsoever of regrouped persons being shot by members of the police or the military. No Government could dare perpetrate such acts. There were many international observers on site; while it was true that many of the organizations to which they belonged considered that the regroupment camps restricted the human rights of the camp-dwellers, the Government considered that regroupment was a temporary measure and was the

lesser of two evils. Furthermore, the presence of the army was to ensure that the people in the camps did not fall prey to armed Tutsi and Hutu bandits as well as rebels who were responsible for many atrocities, mostly against Hutus.

59. In response to Mr. Wolfrum's query about the treatment of refugees from other countries, he concluded by saying that he was unaware of any mistreatment. In fact, traditionally, Burundi had been a haven for refugees from other countries in the Great Lakes region. He invited the Committee to furnish his delegation with specific information of any mistreatment of such refugees so that corrective action could be taken.

60. Mr. ABOUL-NASR noted that Burundi was reporting to the Committee for the first time. Referring to Mr. Wolfrum's summing up, he said that the fact that there was still disagreement was not to be construed as an accusation of the State party. On the contrary, the aim was to ascertain the implementation of the Convention, and questions, such as those on education, had been raised with Burundi in the same way as they were with all other States parties in an endeavour to stress the importance of education in eliminating discrimination. The Committee wished to assist States parties in implementing the Convention and in that regard, respected the points of view of States parties and looked forward to reciprocity from them.

61. He invited the delegation of Burundi to review the Committee's consideration of the reports of other States parties which would reveal that the Committee had been very circumspect and cooperative in its consideration of the report from Burundi in comparison with its characteristically critical approach. He hoped that his explanation would allay any feelings that the delegation of Burundi might have had that the Committee was criticizing its country.

62. The CHAIRMAN regretted that there had not been an opportunity to brief the delegation on the Committee's procedure. The Committee welcomed further dialogue with the delegation and looked forward to reading the remaining points in the next report.

63. Mr. NSANZE (Burundi) assured the Committee that at no time had his delegation considered that the Committee had been levelling accusations or criticism at his delegation, Government or country. On the contrary, the Committee had been seeking to elicit facts and to propose solutions based on such facts. His delegation's statements had been prompted by a need to give its views and clarify information on some situations, thereby avoiding any ambiguity and laying the ground for positive and productive dialogue. He assured the Committee of his familiarity with the Convention and the Committee's work.

64. He agreed with Mr. Aboul-Nasr's suggestion about a statement on the suffering caused by the economic blockade and said that a comprehensive statement would be issued soon to address the problem of what he saw as the worst sanctions ever to be imposed on any State in the history of the international community.

65. Mr. WOLFRUM endorsed Mr. Aboul-Nasr's explanation of the Committee's approach and stressed the Committee's commitment to ongoing dialogue. To that end, he reminded the delegation of the importance of sending a formal request to the High Commissioner for Human Rights to entrust one or more members of the Committee with a mission to Burundi, as Mr. Aboul-Nasr had suggested. Without a formal request there could be no decision. There would also be a need to send a separate request for technical assistance.

66. In conclusion, he hoped that the consideration of the next report and the ensuing dialogue would be constructive and engaged with a Committee in possession of first-hand information.

67. The CHAIRMAN thanked the delegation of Burundi for its attendance in spite of difficulties and its demonstration of the State party's commitment to dialogue in a bid to improve the implementation of the Convention in Burundi.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.